

Support the Nurturing Families Network

My name is Christine E. Tirado, a resident of New Haven. I am also a home visitor for The Nurturing Families Network in New Haven at the Coordinating Council For Children In Crisis Inc. If you did not know, The Nurturing Families Network (formally Healthy Families) is one of the many programs under the Children's Trust Fund and has actually been around for 14 years. This program is known for its intensive home visiting services to first time parents who are identified as being high risk for child abuse and neglect through research based screening tools.

The Governor wants to eliminate all of the NFN non-hospital sites in both Hartford and New Haven which is a total of 14 sites, leaving only 3 sites in New Haven and 1 site in Hartford. Now, last time I checked, both of these cities are have a high poverty percentage. Did you know that poverty and child abuse are highly correlated? Well they are! Imagine how many child abuse and neglect cases will be opened this year alone in these two cities. There is a very high minority population in these two cities as well. And the state's Commission on Children reported that minority children are most likely to live in poverty, which means they are more likely to be abused and/or neglected. The numbers do not lie.

Perhaps if I talked about money it would grab your attention to this pressing matter. Research has shown that each family in The Nurturing Families Network costs the state about \$3,400. Each family with a substantiated DCF case costs the state \$30,000. Every time a young person is arrested, it costs the state \$44,000. Where is the best place to save money for the state's budget crisis?

In my agency alone there are four full time home visitors on staff and one part time home visitor who works specifically with fathers. On my caseload alone, I have been able to provide services to 34 families in time span of two years. If none of these families had been served, and 20% of them ended up with substantiated DCF cases it would have cost the state \$204,000. In 2008, the New Haven and Hartford sites served a total of 1,716 families. In 2009, they served 2,039 families. The Center for Social Research in Hartford estimated that these NFN non-hospital sites could potentially serve a total of 1,878 families. That number drastically drops with the cut of the 14 non-hospital sites and the 30% across the board cut already being made to all sites to 836 families. That means there could potentially be 684 families who are at high risk for child abuse and neglect in our state. Since these 684 families are at high risk for child abuse and neglect, 20% of them will most likely end up on a DCF caseload potentially costing the state \$30,000 each. That's \$4,104,000 that could have been spent on more pressing items in the state's budget.

Apart from the cost effectiveness of our non-hospital sites in New Haven and Hartford, you would be voting for the termination of nearly 100 positions. The governor's plan mentioned that her goal was to create jobs, not to take them away. That's 100 unemployment claims, and possibly 100 people who would need state health insurance.

If you vote yes to this bill to save money now, we will all pay in the long run. What good is a *short term* benefit that will create a *long term frustration*? Please don't allow the state to use the termination of the NFN non-hospital sites in New Haven and Hartford as a quick fix. At this current time, all New Haven sites are at capacity. Take that away, the remaining 3 hospital sites will not be able to service the families left waiting for help.